*This book is for my talented, supportive children—*
*J. David Creswell and Johanna Creswell.*

*—John*

*This book is dedicated to Mark for all of his support,*
*encouragement, friendship, and love. I thank him to the moon and back.*

*—Vicki*

# Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research


John W. Creswell
Vicki L. Plano Clark
*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*




*For information:*



Sage Publications, Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
E-mail: order@sagepub.com

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## PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK •

Researchers in the social, health, and human sciences have a wide range of research methods from which to choose. These methods range from the quantitative to the qualitative, and now researchers and graduate students across the social sciences have begun to combine these methods in mixed methods designs. Mixed methods research has been gaining in acceptance and becoming more common in studies across the social sciences, including diverse fields such as sociology, nursing, health, management, evaluation, and education.

From our collective research experiences and conversations with colleagues, we have found that a mixed methods approach has interdisciplinary appeal to many researchers. These researchers hold increasingly diverse worldviews and tackle complex issues and problems that beg for a blending of qualitative and quantitative data. Hence, mixed methods designs provide researchers, across research disciplines, with a rigorous approach to answering their research questions.

Much has been written about the use of mixed methods, but these writings are, typically, difficult to locate and are conceptual and theoretical in nature rather than applied. In addition, there is little available practical advice about how to actually design and conduct a mixed methods research study that is both of acceptable quality and feasible.

The purpose of this book is to provide an introduction to mixed methods research, to discuss the steps involved in designing and conducting this form of inquiry, and, within these steps, to focus on four types of mixed methods designs. We set out to write a book that builds from the literature and offers mixed methods researchers practical advice for conceptualizing, proposing, designing, conducting, and publishing their mixed methods studies. Our hope is that a better understanding of mixed methods research can result in better research across the social, health, and human sciences.

Furthermore, it may lead to the development of a new generation of researchers who have the skills and experiences to use wisely those research techniques and tools that are most appropriate for the complex questions being studied today, as well as those that will be studied in the future.

## AUDIENCE FOR THE BOOK

This book targets advanced graduate students as well as researchers at all levels from diverse disciplines who are designing mixed methods studies. We have attempted to combine the latest thinking about mixed methods research designs with practical, step-by-step guidelines and recommendations for the decisions that researchers must make when designing a mixed methods research study. We offer advice that will assist researchers in negotiating the demands and issues that arise as they design a mixed methods project, including suggestions on how to keep a project manageable for a beginning researcher and still ensure quality research. The book concludes with a discussion of current issues in mixed methods research and the common questions that confront mixed methods researchers who are planning a mixed methods study. We hear these questions asked time and time again when we work with researchers individually, at workshops, and in graduate courses.

## BOOK FEATURES

We have incorporated a number of features throughout the book to facilitate its use by researchers designing their own studies and by graduate students learning about mixed methods research in a course or seminar. We have organized the content using an overall guiding framework of the process of designing and conducting a mixed methods study. Although aspects of this process may simplify the reality of a complex and nonlinear process, they provide a guiding framework that can be very helpful to researchers new to mixed methods research. In addition, we discuss mixed methods research in terms of a parsimonious set of four major types of designs, and we highlight variants within each of the major designs. To help illustrate the practical side of conducting mixed methods research, we have included four complete mixed methods articles in the book, and we refer to additional examples drawn from across the social, behavioral, and health sciences.

The content of the book takes the reader through the process of designing and conducting a research study. Building on the ideas discussed within Creswell's (2003) *Research Design*, we introduce each topic by reviewing its application within quantitative and qualitative research and then address it from the point of view of mixed methods research in general and from the perspective of each of the four mixed methods designs in particular. We emphasize the procedures and special challenges that researchers face in each of the designs and offer practical guidelines, checklists, and scripts to help researchers plan out and implement a rigorous mixed methods design. Each chapter concludes with a short list of important references that readers can turn to for a more theoretical treatment of the topics. To facilitate the adoption of this text for a graduate level course or its use in a seminar, a brief list of suggested activities to guide the reader through specific steps in developing and writing a proposal for a mixed methods study is also included at the end of each chapter.



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